CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method of protecting a glass-ceramic surface comprising applying a layer of silicone to at least a portion of the glass-ceramic surface.

2. The method according to claim 1, wherein the step of applying includes spraying the silicone through a spray nozzle.

3. The method according to claim 2, further comprising masking a first portion of the glass-ceramic surface with a second portion of the glass-ceramic surface, whereby the second portion receives a layer of the RTV silicone applied thereto and the first portion remains substantially free of RTV silicone.

4. The method according to claim 1, wherein the step of applying includes spraying the silicone through a spray nozzle positioned on a robotic arm.

5. The method according to claim 4, further comprising controlling the robotic arm automatically with a controller.

6. The method according to claim 1, wherein the step of applying includes rolling the silicone on the glass-ceramic surface using a roller.

7. The method according to claim 1, wherein the step of applying includes applying the layer of silicone to a portion of the glass-ceramic surface which is adapted to contact an associated element.

8. The method according to claim 1, wherein the step of applying the layer of silicone includes applying a layer of RTV silicone.

9. A method of manufacturing a cooktop comprising:

providing a glass-ceramic surface having a first side for receiving cooking implements and a second side, opposite the first side; and

applying a layer of silicone to at least a portion of the second side.

10. The method according to claim 9, wherein the step of applying includes applying the layer of silicone so that the first side remains substantially free of silicone.

11. The method according to claim 9, wherein the step of applying includes applying the layer of silicone in a burner receiving area and further comprising connecting a burner in the burner receiving area, wherein the burner contacts the layer of silicone in the burner receiving area.

12. The method according to claim 11, wherein the step of connecting the burner includes attaching the burner to form a seal between the burner receiving area and the burner, whereby solids and liquids are prevented from passing through the cooktop in the burner receiving area.

13. The method according to claim 9, wherein the step of applying includes spraying the silicone through a spray nozzle.

14. The method according to claim 9, wherein the step of applying includes applying the layer with a thickness of greater than 0.003 inches.

15. The method according to claim 9, wherein the step of applying includes applying the layer with a thickness between approximately 0.008 and 0.020 inches.

16. A cooktop comprising a glass-ceramic cooking surface and a layer of protective silicone applied to at least a portion of the glass-ceramic cooking surface.

17. The cooktop according to claim 16, wherein the glass-ceramic surface includes a first side for receiving cooking implements and a second side, opposite the first side, and wherein the layer of protective silicone is applied to at least a portion of the second side.

18. The cooktop according to claim 17, wherein the silicone is an RTV silicone.

19. The cooktop according to claim 17, wherein the layer of protective silicone is between approximately 0.008 and 0.020 inches thick.

20. A cooktop comprising:

a glass-ceramic cooking surface;

at least one of a gas burner and a cooktop grate which contact the glass-ceramic surface; and

a layer of protective silicone applied to at least one of the glass-ceramic cooking surface and one of the at least one of the gas burner and the cooktop grate.

21. The cooktop according to claim 20, wherein the glass-ceramic surface includes a burner receiving area, wherein the layer of silicone is applied to at least one of the burner receiving area and a portion of the burner, and the burner is connected to the glass-ceramic surface in the burner receiving area with the layer of protective silicone disposed therebetween.

22. The cooktop according to claim 21, wherein the layer of silicone forms a seal between the burner and the glass-ceramic surface, whereby solids and liquids are prevented from passing through the cooktop in the burner receiving area.

23. The cooktop according to claim 20, wherein the glass-ceramic surface includes a grate receiving area, and the cooktop grate includes a mounting surface in contact with the grate receiving area, wherein the layer of protective silicone is applied to the mounting surface for protection of the glass-ceramic cooking surface.